

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2031
ANSWERED ON:13.12.2004
FUNCTIONING OF CONSUMER COMMISSIONS
Yadav Shri Baleshwar

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

- (a) the issues that came up for discussion during the Conference of Heads of State Consumer Commissions and State Consumer Secretaries in New Delhi during August, 2004;
- (b) the details of the steps taken by the Union Government to ensure timely disposal of complaints of consumers;
- (c) the steps taken to fill the posts of Chairman and Members in State Consumer Commissions and District Consumer Forums immediately; and
- (d) the efforts made to bring transparency in the functioning of consumer forums and to make optimum utilization of financial assistance provided by the Government?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN)

(a) : With a view to ensure effective functioning of consumer forums in the country various connected issues were discussed in the Conference of Presidents of State Commissions and the Secretaries in-charge of Consumer Affairs in the States organized by the NCDRC on 17th August, 2004. The important issues discussed were to assess the infrastructure and minimum staff requirements, uniform pattern of honorarium/remuneration and other allowances for the full time Members of consumer forums, declaring President State Commission as Head of Department and President, District Forum as Head of Office, training of Presidents/Members, timely filling up the vacant posts of Presidents/Members, submission of period reports to NCDRC and the State Govt. by the State Commissions, creation of more benches of State Commissions and additional district forums etc.

(b) to (d): The disposal of cases by the consumer disputes redressal agencies in the country is mainly affected by inadequate infrastructure, adjournments, non-filling up of the posts of the Presidents/Members. Some of the steps taken for the speedy disposal of cases by these agencies are as under:

(i) One time grant of Rs.61.80 crores sanctioned to the States/UTs by the Central Government to supplement their efforts to strengthen the infrastructure of the consumer disputes redressal agencies. Central Government is impressing upon the State Governments to utilize it optimally to augment the infrastructure as per scheme;

(ii) Monitoring of the working of consumer disputes redressal agencies through the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission;

(iii) States and Union Territories are requested from time to time to take prompt steps to fill up vacant posts of President/Member in the consumer disputes redressal agencies and maintain a panel of suitable candidates for appointment as President/Member;

(iv) The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 has been amended in 2002 mainly to facilitate the quicker disposal of complaints besides enhancing the capabilities of the consumer fora, strengthening them with more powers and also by streamlining the procedures and widening the scope of the Act. A provision has also been incorporated in the amendment empowering the senior most Member to act as President in the absence of the regular President of the consumer forums for their uninterrupted functioning. President, National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission and the State Commission have been empowered to constitute benches with one or more members for expediting disposal of cases.

In terms of the Act, a three tier quasi-judicial consumer disputes redressal machinery has been established at the District, State and National level to provide relief to the consumers. The responsibility for setting up of the State Commissions and District Forums including the appointment of Presidents & Members and to ensure their effective functioning rests with the State Governments/UT Administrations. However, the Department has been impressing upon the State Governments from time to time for the need to computerize and adopt Information Technology at consumer forums and provide IT solutions in order to achieve e-governance,

transparency and efficiency.